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ABSTRACT

For the global education movement, the way to international understanding is the "recognition of the increasing interdependence of nations and cultures." Central to this hopeful vision are the traditional concerns of those areas of knowledge that have come to be known as the humanities--languages, literature, the arts, philosophy, and history. While the importance of the humanities to the aspirations of the global education movement is apparent, the place of the humanities in the American school is far less visible. The evidence suggests that there are almost no humanities in the standard school curriculum with which the goals of global education can be integrated. The current state of the humanities in the school curriculum is reviewed, and the relationship of global education to the humanities is discussed. Suggestions are made for a humanistic approach to global education. (CB)

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A PLACE FOR THE HUMANITIES IN GLOBAL EDUCATION

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For the global education movement, the way to international understanding is the "recognition of the increasing interdependence of nations and cultures." Central to this hopeful vision are the traditional concerns of those areas of knowledge that have come to be known as the humanities: languages, literature, the arts, philosophy, and history. The first step towards the recognition of global interdependence is the "awareness of the diversity of cultures, ideas and practices found in societies around the world..." and the knowledge "that one's view of the world is not universally shared..." What follows next is the acceptance of "goals and values that transcend national cultures and ideologies." Self-awareness of our limited perspective of the world comes from the humanistic examination of our self-image; and it is only then, after we have learned how we think of ourselves, that we can go on to distinguish how we think of other people in the world, what they value, and how we relate to them. This is the educative process that will ultimately lead, it is hoped by global educators, to the understanding that "all humans share common needs and cannot pursue their destinies in isolation."¹

The importance of the humanities to the aspirations of the global education movement is apparent. Far less visible, however, is the place of the humanities in the American school. Indeed, the evidence suggests that there are almost no humanities in the standard school curriculum with which the goals of global education can be integrated.

The Humanities in the School Curriculum

Although there have not been any systematic surveys of humanities content in the school curriculum, and it is quite possible that National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) teacher institutes have sparked some recent interest in

humanities teaching, even the casual observer would be hard pressed to find the humanities in most schools. In 1980 the Rockefeller Commission on the Humanities reported that the humanities, "widely undervalued and often poorly understood," have been neglected in the schools, and the 1983 issue of Daedalus devoted to "The Arts and Humanities in America's Schools," lamented that the state of the humanities in the schools "can only be called disheartening."² In his study A Place Called School, which was based on the direct observation of over 1,000 classrooms, John I. Goodlad reported that most of the elementary school curriculum was devoted to mathematics and English/language arts, that at both the elementary and secondary levels English/language arts programs emphasized language mechanics to the virtual exclusion of expression and communication, that the social studies were similarly devoid of "human interest," that foreign languages were rarely taught, and that "there was a noticeable absence of emphasis on the arts as cultural expression and artifact."³ According to the editor of Daedalus, which actually sent investigators into the schools of several cities, "failure" was the only word that captured the level of student accomplishment in "English, foreign languages, and history/social studies."⁴ So alarmed was the Rockefeller Commission at the neglect of the humanities in the public schools that it assigned the highest priority in its reform agenda to improving humanities instruction in elementary and secondary education.

Whether the present state of the humanities in the schools represents a dramatic decline from earlier decades is unclear. At least as far back as the 1940's, when a generation of scholars troubled by relativism pumped out one book after another on the desperate plight of the humanities, humanists have inveighed against the encroachments of science and decried the lamentable state of the humanities in our public schools. The defense of the humanities has been unceasing since that time, except for a brief period during the 1950's when the threat of international peril inspired a conservative search for durable values that would root us more firmly in the past. For a while, there

was more interest in substantiating the viability of ideas and culture than in making gloomy predictions of the imminent demise of the humanities; it was a time, according to one humanities scholar when "most historians did not wish to be known as social scientists."⁵ But there is little evidence to indicate that this momentary preoccupation with culture ever found its way into the typical school curriculum. One survey of the humanities in secondary education, undertaken in 1966, could find humanities courses in only 325 of the nation's schools, while another, completed a few years later, indicated that the vast majority of humanities programs in the schools were initiated during the social turbulence of the 1960's. It was in the midst of this turbulence that the spirited defense of the humanities resumed. In 1964, the American Council of Learned Societies, as part of its successful campaign to create the NEH, issued a report that declared the humanities "in the national interest." This report also pointed to a sharp decline of interest in the humanities, laying the blame, in part, on the schools, which suffered from "lack of properly educated teachers, lack of time, lack of space, and lack of good teaching materials."⁶ Every report that followed, including the annual reports of the NEH, arrived at substantially the same conclusions. Nevertheless, since none of these reports contains quantitative information on the state of the humanities at the time, it is not possible to establish whether the humanities have actually declined. For all we know, the state of the humanities in the schools might be neither better nor worse than it was in the 1940's.

What is clear, however, is that the humanities are not central to the school curriculum, and that, despite the infusion of large sums of federal money for humanities and inservice training projects, their position in the schools has not improved. The meagre evidence available suggests that, if anything, humanities instruction in the schools has weakened slightly over the past decade. There is a well documented decline in humanities courses at the college and university level, and from this, it is reasonable to infer

that the present generation of teachers have had less exposure to the humanities, and are less prepared to teach them, than their predecessors. In his study of secondary education for the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, moreover, Ernest L. Boyer reports a precipitous drop in foreign language enrollments between 1971 and 1981, and a slight decrease in the amount of student time devoted to English and social studies.⁷

It is the enfeebled position of the humanities that has inspired scholars to come to their defense. But it is the unrelenting attacks of social scientists that have provoked this defense. Just after World War I, when they began their quest for a pure behavioral science, political scientists, economists, sociologists and others in the social sciences began to display a disdain for the normative propensity of humanistic scholarship. Pursuing methodological rigor, they accused the humanities disciplines of being speculative and value-laden, and attacked their historicism by pointing to the unreliability of data from the past. Their hostility towards the past and history was reinforced by their belief, especially powerful during the depression of the 1930's, that knowledge could only be justified by its instrumental use in the solution of contemporary problems. It was in response to these attacks that the humanities began to assume their current definition.

The humanities are a residual category of scholarship, and, as such, lack a clearly defined methodological focus. They consist of those academic disciplines engaged in the study of man that were no longer acceptable to the members of a new fraternity of self-conscious social scientists. The initial response to this exclusiveness by some scholars was to become intensely anti-scientific and to extoll the virtues of past wisdom. In time, the mainstream accepted the division between the social sciences and the humanities, a division that was affirmed in the widely influential Harvard University report in 1945 on General Education in a Free Society, and they asserted as their private

domain the stewardship of our cultural heritage, the liberation of the human spirit, and a concern with values and valuation. Still others, joining their attackers, sought to reform the methodological base of their disciplines and become more scientific. By 1965, when the NEH was established, the humanities had come to include literature, linguistics, history, philosophy, archaeology, jurisprudence, and the study of art and music. But not everyone in these disciplines regarded himself or his discipline as humanistic. Those who sought to become more scientific, like the analytical philologists and the quantitative historians, called themselves social scientists, not humanists. All of the humanities disciplines, incapable of aligning their subject areas with a particular methodology, were fraught with dissension and confusion.⁸ When the magazine Change organized a humanities conference in 1975, the participants "spoke as if they belonged to a little known sect [that was] disliked where known in the larger society, and divided within."⁹

Perhaps it was this confusion that helped pave the way for a softening of the lines that separated the humanities from the social sciences. But so too did the increasing awareness among many social scientists of the limits of the scientific method. Although the complete reconciliation that some had hoped for when the NEH was created never came, most areas of scholarship concerned with the study of man now recognize the need to understand the complexity of the individual experience as well as the necessity of analytically testing general laws. If it is important through objective, dispassionate scientific analysis to establish recurrent patterns of behavior that might explain social causality, it is equally important through the qualitative, impressionistic assessment of the humanities to remember that human beings act in terms of specific values that are rooted to the conditions of a particular time and place. If value-free analysis might enable us to discover the basic elements of human behavior, by itself it leads to the nihilistic incoherence of being unable to discriminate

the inherent worth of different aspects of human behavior.

The rapprochement between social science scholarship and the evaluative strategies of the humanities has been proceeding for well over a decade. Now, more than one-fourth of the articles in the major sociological journals are historical, and there have been a number of recent studies by social scientists, among them James Sterling Young's The Washington Community, 1800-1828 and Anthony F.C. Wallace's Rockdale, that have successfully captured the ambiguity and complexity of past consciousness. The appearance of intellectual hybrids like psycholinguistics and historical sociology further attests to the growing recognition that no discipline or group of disciplines can claim methodological purity.¹⁰

Yet, of all the scholarly fields that study human behavior, education has been among the most resistant to this rapprochement. This is especially the case of those areas of education that deal with curriculum development in English and the social studies, the two places in the school curriculum that should be most receptive to the humanities. In English the study of literature has been superceded by an obsessive concern with the teaching of language skills. It is reading level that is regarded as the measure of success, not literary interpretation. In the social studies, where most humanities courses have at one time or another been located, concept learning, often through rote memorization, has taken precedence over historical understanding. When curriculum specialists advocate the use of historical sources that might subjectively convey the non-quantifiable meaning of an event or experience, more often than not it is as data for testing or illustrating a precisely formulated social science concept or hypothesis. They rarely look upon historical study as a way of imaginatively transporting the student to another time and place, making him a participant in past events and enabling him to grasp the subjective meanings that people give to those events. History is simply a reservoir of data from which it is possible to draw in order to verify social science concepts. Little thought is given to the infinite residue of this reservoir from which it is possible to

dredge up past events and experiences that would render any social theory reductionist or merely descriptive. If values are handled at all, and they seldom are, it is usually advocated that they be hierarchized into an objectively and rationally arranged set of value-choices that prevents the empathetic understanding of the historic context that nurtured them and was shaped by them.¹¹

The hostility to humanistic knowledge in curriculum research comes, in part, from the emphasis among professional educators on instrumentally applying scientific knowledge to practical problems. In America the basis for claiming a professional identity is the existence of an underlying body of basic scientific knowledge that theoretically justifies the practical application of skills. This is especially so in minor professions like education, which, in comparing themselves to the more prestigious professions of law and medicine, routinely subordinate the importance of practical experience to the need for a firm grounding in scientific theory. With such a strong positivist bias, scholars in professional schools of education tend to be impatient with any knowledge that is uncertain, complex and evaluative.¹²

The resistance to humanistic study also comes from the need for publicly supported schools to justify the practical importance of what is being taught. For the most part, the humanities are not regarded as "useful" because their contribution to contemporary life cannot be measured on a utilitarian scale. It is for this reason that the rote memorization of conceptual definitions and reading skills, both of which can be measured by machine-scored tests, take precedence over thinking and speculating in our schools. Unable to demonstrate their immediate use to a society that is anxious for quick results and values technological solutions, the humanities have been relegated to minor electives in the school curriculum. Scholars in the humanities have done little to reverse this sorry state, because they too have been socialized to believe that their work has little relevance to the present, and, accordingly, they usually remain aloof from the schools.

The Relationship of Global Education to the Humanities

The anti-humanistic bias among professional educators has carried over into the global education movement. This is not surprising in view of the close affiliation of global education to social studies curriculum development. Almost all of the pleas for the development of global curricula are couched in utilitarian arguments that promise a solution, in the not-too-distant future, to some of the world's most pressing problems (hunger, energy shortages, nuclear war, etc.), and presumably require teaching materials that are directly and demonstrably relevant to these problems.

There is, as well, a strong scientific bias among many advocates of global education against the inclusion of humanistic approaches to knowledge in global studies curricula. This is especially so among those who advocate systems analysis, and they are the dominant force in the global education movement at this time. Several of these global educators, for example, have argued against teaching students that human beings have a capacity to dramatically alter nature and that change is as important as continuity in understanding our links to the past. What they desire instead is an emphasis on the perspective "which views humankind as belonging to the earth rather than the earth to us," and which "treats time as an interactive system of past, present, and future, mutually influencing one another as parts of a single human history."¹³ This is a perspective, when combined with the utilitarian justification of global education, that fits the imperative in schools of education to develop a base of scientific knowledge that can be applied to practical problems.

Deterministic and ahistorical, the systems approach to global education sacrifices historical complexity to analytical abstraction, and it is basically hostile to the humanities. What this approach assumes is that human behavior is determined by superhuman forces beyond the control of the individual and that these forces operate in the same way regardless of time or place. It is conducive to

the abstraction and categorization of human experience into units of analysis that can be used to compare behavior over time and space. But it fails to probe the irrational and subjective aspects of such behavior, and, in so doing, blinds us to the reasons why individuals act in the way they do. Such myopia is exacerbated when the subject of analysis is a non-Western culture. Since the abstract units of analysis used to classify behavior are a product of our own culture, and can hardly be regarded as neutral, they prevent the student from seeing the world from the perspective of the people whom he is studying.

Despite these shortcomings, the systems approach, with its unbridled faith in scientific inquiry, has become the orthodoxy of global educators who construct curricula and design teacher education programs. At the heart of this faith in the scientific method is a powerful belief that all humans have the same basic needs (shelter, food, health, education, etc.), and that increasing "political, military, economic, and social" interdependence, together with "globalized communication and transportation," are producing a common set of transnational values that have "universal validity" and constitute "global standards for life." With the hope of facilitating the movement towards worldwide acceptance of a shared "pool of global values," it has become fashionable to advocate that teachers and curricula emphasize what people have in common rather than the "differences among cultures and civilizations."¹⁴ If in fact the world is moving in this direction, then scientific thinking that seeks universal generality may be more appropriate to the study of our global interactions than humanistic strategies that focus on the idiosyncratic.

To bolster their argument that a longterm trend of increasing interdependence is bringing about a "global transnational society," global educators with a bent towards systems analysis have turned in recent years to world histories, like Immanuel Wallerstein's The World System, that takes as its unit of analysis a worldwide system of economic exploitation, and social histories, like Fernand Braudel's brilliant The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of

Phillip II, which records the slow undercurrents of longterm development. Both approaches to history deterministically assume that man's consciousness is the product, and not the architect, of the world's economic and social structures. It is precisely this deterministic conception of historical development, which diminishes the importance of idiosyncratic behavior, that makes Wallerstein and Braudel so attractive to these global educators. But it is also this underlying theory of historical causation that accounts for the failure of Wallerstein and Braudel, as well as the remarkable Annaliste school of French history in which Braudel was nurtured, to make any significant contribution to contemporary history. Their preoccupation with the constraints of environment, climate, economic cycles and social structures works well in a pre-industrial world where man had not yet learned to master nature. But in our recent history, during which man achieved almost limitless power over nature, the impact on historical change of war, revolution, ideology, and the actions of individual political leaders cannot be ignored.¹⁵

Nor is it possible to ignore the discontinuities and disjunctions in our recent history. It may be that increased interaction among the peoples of the world is producing a common culture that cuts across national geographic boundaries. But a more persuasive case can be made that just the opposite is occurring. With the increased intensity of global communications and transportation, the spread of western technology and materialistic values has so disrupted the traditional values of many societies that it has provoked a reactionary revitalization of particularistic ethnic, racial, and national loyalties. The recent disintegration of UNESCO, the archetype of an international organization based on values presumed to be universal, as well as the worldwide resurgence of religious fundamentalism and ethnic exclusiveness, underline the importance of understanding particularistic cultural values if we are to understand the world. In a recent celebration at New York University marking the fortieth anniversary of the United Nations, a veteran diplomat, expressing the disillusionment of many, noted that he and his colleagues

had been naive in their expectations of newly independent countries.

"We believed Ralph Bunche when he told us they would think like us. We were wrong."¹⁶

The world's populations may be increasingly subject to the same global forces.

But their interpretation of what these forces mean and how they should respond to them differs markedly from one culture to another. The systems approach to global education, which looks for recurrent regularities, is not only insensitive to these differences, but it often obscures them.

A Humanistic Approach to Global Education

The one approach to global education that is sensitive to these differences is cross-cultural analysis. It seeks to increase our awareness of the cultural diversity of the world and assumes that culture both informs and affects human action. As an approach to improving international understanding, cross-cultural analysis gained in popularity during the 1950's when scholars increasingly turned to the study of values. Soon afterwards, it became institutionalized in area studies programs. But by the end of the 1960's this approach was no longer in vogue. In particular, among social studies curriculum specialists, the tremendous prestige that was attached to social science inquiry drove cross-cultural analysis into the background, and there it remains today.¹⁷ Yet, of the different approaches to global education, it is the only one into which the humanities can be comfortably integrated.

Within the standard school curriculum, the logical place to locate a humanities program based on cross-cultural analysis is the social studies. The cultural focus of English education is, of course, too narrow, and art and music, both of which are dominated by instruction for performance, have been shunted to the very periphery of the curriculum. It is the social studies that lays claim to the study of history, and the importance of learning history has received a recent boost from a number of prominent education critics who have expressed concern

about the failure of the schools to transmit our cultural heritage.¹⁸ This reawakened interest in history, together with the humanistic orientation of cross-cultural analysis, might be the very vehicle to at long last carry the humanities into the school curriculum.

Educating social studies teachers in cross-cultural analysis requires more than tinkering with existing social studies methods courses. This is a tactic that is especially unpromising now, since the pressure to reduce education requirements in the preparation of teachers will undoubtedly result in special methods courses becoming even more cluttered with the content from educational sociology, history and psychology. What is proposed here is a complete revamping of the sequence of required liberal arts courses in history, and the modification of the content of these courses to fit a framework of comparative analysis. Since most of the courses affected are already taught, it should be fairly easy to implement this strategy for infusing the teacher education sequence in social studies with a comparative cultural perspective.

Comparative historical study can provide the basis for cross-cultural understanding, but only if the temptation to subordinate these studies to the testing of abstract social science generalizations, a temptation that is ever present in the positivist atmosphere of schools of education, is scrupulously avoided. The success of comparative study depends upon specific knowledge about the way people think, feel and act in similar situations at different times and places. Without a large reservoir of background information about how different institutions and ideas succeeded and failed in specific historical settings, there can be no comparative analysis. The spectacular failure of New York City's recent effort to implement a 9th and 10th grade global history curriculum, organized around the general concept of cultural diffusion, was due precisely to this lack of historical background on the part of the teachers, the curriculum guides, and, for the most part, those who prepared the guides. The primary objective of comparative study directed

towards cross-cultural understanding should be the comprehensive, subjective grasp of the cultures and societies that are being examined, not the verification or development of scientific generalizations that might be applied to all societies.

There are basically three models of comparative history, of which two are especially applicable to a teacher education program based on cross-cultural analysis.¹⁹ The oldest type of comparative history, one that goes back to Auguste Comte and Herbert Spencer, is the evolutionary approach, which assumes that all societies and cultures pass through the same stages of development, moving from simple to complex forms of social organization. This is conjectural history, which for the most part has been abandoned in serious historical scholarship, because there is no way to establish the existence of a single pattern of development through which all societies pass. The disadvantage of this model in training teachers is that it promotes a strong ethnocentric bias, encourages invidious distinctions between our own and other societies, and obscures what is unique in the historical development of other cultures.

More useful in the training of social studies teachers are the genetic and analogical approaches to comparative history. In both there is as much interest in the differences as in the similarities between cultures and societies. By recognizing the significance of cultural differences, they take into account the diverse meanings that different people give to the same events.

The comparative history sequence for social studies teachers should begin with the standard one year course in Western Civilization, to be followed by a one year survey of American history. Both courses should be organized around a genetic comparative approach to cultural analysis. The genetic approach, which was first developed by Marc Bloch, a founder of the Annaliste school and a student of Emile Durkheim, focuses on societies that are similar to one

another and looks for the genetic links between them. For Bloch, in his pioneering French Rural History, this involved tracing over time lineal connections in the forms of life of several related, but different, regions. For others, such as Robert R. Palmer in his Age of Democratic Revolution, this involves looking at how several societies with a similar cultural heritage responded to the same forces of change at about the same time. What all genetic comparativists assume is that the character of any society is largely shaped by what it inherits from the culture of its immediate ancestors.

Within this framework the standard college course in Western Civilization should be reorganized around broad cultural themes that are linked to the emergence of a distinctive American culture. These themes might include the emphasis on man's need to conquer nature, the tolerance for cultural heterogeneity, the penchant for dualistic distinctions, the respect for abstract rights, the impulse for economic exploitation, the pressure for migration and expansion, the importance of private ownership, the notion of progressive time, and the tension between individualism and collectivism. Knowledge of these cultural patterns, and the different forms and functions that they assumed at different times in various places, would constitute the background against which students would examine our own history. American history would be taught as an extension of Western civilization. But this does not mean that the American history course should dwell on similarities with other Western societies. On the contrary, it is by understanding the different manifestations and interpretations of a common cultural heritage under varying conditions that students will be able to grasp with any clarity the distinctive character of American culture. Among the distinctive aspects of America that might constitute a suitable focus for an American history course in a comparative context are its isolation and insularity, the fluidity of its class structure, its optimism and hopefulness, and the premium placed on individualism and self-reliance.

With a view towards further clarifying the nature of American society, students would then take a one year course in the history of a particular non-Western culture. By focusing on a single culture they would have sufficient time to probe it in some depth. Following the pattern developed in area studies programs, students should pursue a multidisciplinary course of study that includes, in addition to history, geography, the arts, anthropology, economics, politics, and at least some exposure to the principal indigenous language and literature. The emphasis in the course should be on what is uniquely intrinsic to that culture, and how these distinguishing characteristics differentiate it from the West. This will enable students to compare and contrast the complexities of their own culture with those of a non-Western culture, in terms of both its past and present.

The comparative sequence for students in social studies education should conclude with a one semester seminar organized around the analogical model of comparative analysis. This approach, which assumes that many similarities between cultures and societies cannot be explained by genetic links, is very compatible with social theory construction, but not without regard for the tentativeness of such abstractions. Some analogical histories, like Crane Brinton's Anatomy of Revolution, simply describe common structural properties of similar events at various times and places, without really explaining why these events took place. Others, like Cyril Black's The Modernization of Japan and Russia, look for underlying relationships that explain why similar events can occur in different countries that have dissimilar backgrounds and little influence on one another. While both reveal relationships that are conducive to the construction of generalizations, they also take into account differences that highlight the danger of making false analogies based on inadequate knowledge of cultural differences.

The emphasis on history in this proposal reflects my personal conviction that you can only understand the present in terms of the past. The present

has no distinctive form except in so far as it can be projected against the past. Before the spread of historical thinking and understanding in the nineteenth century, we knew too little about our antecedents²⁰ to define the present. In earlier times, the present appeared static and inevitable; it was not considered a state of being in the process of development. Now, with our immense knowledge of the past, we can begin to understand the complexities of the present, and, as we accumulate additional information about other cultures and their histories, our knowledge about ourselves will deepen.

The purpose of such knowledge, and, indeed, of global education, is to improve international understanding. To believe that everyone is alike, or becoming alike, is to blind ourselves to the differences that account for the diverse meanings that people impute to their lives. Such blindness is dangerous. It is when we are ignorant of these differences that we are most likely to miscalculate the consequences of our actions, to overestimate and underestimate our accomplishments, and to contribute to international misunderstanding. To know ourselves is the first step towards becoming responsible actors in the global arena; it is the first step towards becoming mature world citizens.

NOTES

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20. Walter J. Ong, "Crisis and Understanding in the Humanities," Daedalus, 98, no. 3 (Summer, 1969), 617; George Bonham, "Demystifying the Humanities," Change, 12, no. 7 (October, 1980), 16-17.